

Two high school boys have been helping us work sheep for the past week. My neighbor, Goat Whiskers the Younger, sent them over here. Whiskers has been using the on-the-job trainees as summer crowbar specialists for a fencing job. Operating a crowbar is a different craft than shepherding, yet after using the boys three days I can see that hot weather posthole digging whets a student's appetite too for open range horseback exercises.

On the first day, the younger of the two youths asked if the wage scale was the same on our ranch as it was at Goat Whiskers' outfit. I told him that we paid \$2 per day less than Whiskers did, but were planning on initiating an age 65 retirement pension plan that would more than offset the difference.

Using his age bracket (which was 14 years,) I showed him that in 51 years he'd be eligible to draw \$18.75 per month for the rest of his life, proving that he could stay on with us and end up being supported by a tidy sum to enjoy his winter years.

While I was at it I also showed the boy that working by the day was far superior to working on the hourly scale that is used in the cities. As I told him, he was getting roughly 32 hours more experience on a six-day or 72-hour week than workers were on the five-day 40-hour week. Percentage wise he was receiving close to 80 percent more instruction on his ranch job.

It was impossible to gauge his reaction. His hair was long enough to cover his eyes. I never could tell much about a man unless I could see the movement of his entire face. You ought to try some day to talk to a wool blind kid. Their ears and eyes are so well covered, it's sort of like stopping by the beauty shop to tell your wife something that she doesn't want to hear when she's under the hair dryer.

I imagine the time will come when bankers will wear long wigs during office hours. Masks aren't made that can conceal the features as well as an overflow of long hair can. I don't know what the police are going to do when everyone has forsaken the barbershop. Identification then is going to be similar to sorting a herd of woolly mammoths.

Morale hasn't been good since I had the session with the new boys. I attempted to cheer them up by telling them that over in Sweden in July the sun comes up at 3 a.m. and it doesn't get dark until 10 p.m. I thought that news would make our Shortgrass summer days seem short, but I didn't get a response.

Hired hands get harder to please each year. Their palates are pampered by canned hominy and salt pork casseroles plus all the beans and goat meat they can eat. Windmills have tin cups for them to drink from, and on lots of days the clouds provide natural air conditioning to cool their hides.

Young boys can't be expected to be farsighted enough to look toward their old age. Someday they'll be sorry they didn't stay around to see the sunrises and sunsets from a saddle horse instead of directing their lives toward the madness of the concrete freeways. Money isn't everything, you know. It's just a score card to use until you can find a better way.